

PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden, & Kilgwrrwg

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open for worship at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Places must be booked and social distancing maintained in the building and following services.

Again, we stress there is absolutely no obligation to attend in person, and that your own safety and health & those of others must remain paramount. Our broadcast services will continue as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10. a.m. and a reflection & celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. are live-streamed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/>

and are available to watch at any time

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support

Parish Priest (Vicar / Rector):

Fr Michael Gollop,

The Vicarage, St Arvans

01291 622064;

Mobile 07867803479

19th September 2021 The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN

A reading from the Wisdom of Solomon

The ungodly by their words and deeds summoned death; considering him a friend, they pined away and made a covenant with him, because they are fit to belong to his company. For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, 'Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end, and no one has been known to return from Hades. Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.' Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hoped for the wages of holiness, nor discerned the prize for blameless souls;

[1. 16 - 2. 1, 12-22]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord

Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 54

R/ The Lord sustains my life.

Save me, O God, by your name;
in your might, defend my cause.

Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.

R/ The Lord sustains my life.

For the arrogant have risen
up against me,
and the ruthless have sought my life,
those who have no regard for God.
Behold, God is my helper;
it is the Lord who sustains my life.

R/ The Lord sustains my life.

Render evil to those who spy on me;
in your faithfulness, destroy them.
I will offer you a freewill sacrifice
and praise your name, O Lord,
for it is good.
For you have rescued me
from every trouble,
and my eye has seen the ruin of my foes.

R/ The Lord sustains my life.

A reading from the letter of St James

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your

pleasures. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

[3; 13- 4. 3, 7-8a]

*Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God*

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord

Anyone who follows me

will have the light of life

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:

And also with you

[Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Mark](#)

Glory to you, O Lord.

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?'

But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.' [St Mark 9. 30–37]

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ

For Your Prayers

That we may follow the way of Christ in our daily lives & in all our dealings with others.

For the mission of the Church to our society & the spread of the Gospel All

The people of Afghanistan

Those who are suffering the effects of climate change throughout the world

Those throughout the world who continue to suffer from the Coronavirus pandemic - for doctors, nurses and all medical staff, all carers, medical scientists and researchers.

All who are anxious for their health and well being and those of their loved ones.

For those in government throughout the world, that they may make informed, wise and compassionate decisions!

For the Church:

For the bishops of the Church:

Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.

All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians

For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

For the Sick & those in need:

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton; Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Kim; Elisabeth; Helen Herbert; Dave; John; Sue; Elizabeth. Alan; Marion Webster.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Martyn Righton-Jones; Nancy Bull; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Mary Impanni

Thought for the Week

"We are all children of the Most High. All of us: the poorest, the most outcast, a newborn child, a decrepit old person, the least intelligent human being, the most abject, an idiot, a fool, a sometimes sinner, the greatest sinner, the most ignorant, the last of the last, the one most physically and morally repugnant – all children of God and sons and daughters of the Most High. We should hold all human beings in high esteem. We should love all humankind, for they are all children of God."

Bl Charles de Foucauld

The Jereboam Interview

We continue our series of extracts from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'

Jeremiah

Jereboam: Today I am speaking to Jeremiah, who has a particularly fond memory of Jesus. Perhaps you could tell us about it?

Jeremiah: Well, yes...I can't have been more than five or six years old at the time. Jesus asked me to stand in front of him, and he placed his arms on me for several minutes. I felt warm and happy. You know that lovely sensation in your throat when you swallow a really soothing drink? Well, it was a bit like that, except that the lovely sensation filled my whole body.

Jereboam: Did he speak to you?

Jeremiah: A little, yes, although I can't remember much about it. Mainly I remember the warm feeling and, strange as this might sound, the sense that he respected me. While he held me, he was still speaking to the other people there. Apparently he was encouraging them to treat children kindly...so I've been told anyway.

Jereboam: Many of those who travelled around with Jesus in those days have now become teachers in their own right, but you haven't done that, have you?

Jeremiah: No: I didn't experience Jesus' teaching – or at least I was too young to follow much of what he said. However, I did experience Jesus' loving presence, and so now I try to extend that love to others through my prayers. It's a less public role than the work of our teachers, but I consider it important nevertheless.

Jereboam: I'm sure that you're right. Tell us more about what this work entails. How do you "extend his love", as you put it?

Jeremiah: Well, I suppose it would be true to say that the act of praying implies that you feel a love for God. When God responds to your prayer, he necessarily acts through love, because that's what he is. So, if I pray for someone – let's take you as an example – if I pray for you, I approach God because of my love for him, and he acts on you through his infinite love. The whole process consists of love. The danger for a teacher is that your message may become clouded by your personality and worldly considerations. The prayer process removes that selfishness from the cycle.

Jereboam: I feel flattered that you'd even consider praying for me.

Jeremiah: It's no more extraordinary than you deciding to talk to me. Could I point out too that this all ties in with a letter we received the other day from James? He mentioned that if people don't receive what they ask for in prayer, it might be that they haven't prayed properly. Let me just reinterpret that in my own language: the prayer process involves only love, so the results have to be an expression of love. If I ask for something selfish – let's say, for power to win an argument – I might receive strength, but not the self-importance I wanted. God transforms our requests into expressions of His love.... purifies our requests, if you like. At least that's how it seems to me.

Jereboam: You've certainly given us plenty to think about. Thank you, Jeremiah.

A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)

This Week

Today in the Gospel, we hear Jesus tell his disciples about his passion, death and resurrection for a second time. He knew that, along the way, they had been arguing about who was the greatest. He gathers the Apostles and says to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

Monday is the feast day of the Church's Korean martyrs, Tuesday is the Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist, with its own special readings.

The first readings this week come from the book of Ezra, one of the first chroniclers of the post-exile period of Judaism. He is responsible for helping hold the restored people together. We finish the week with brief selections from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who were prophets during this period. "Consider your ways!" "My spirit continues in your midst; do not fear!"

In St Luke's Gospel this week, Jesus urges us to use our gifts: "No one lights a lamp and hides it under a bushel basket." When his family comes looking for him, Jesus uses the occasion to tell us that we are family to him, if we hear his Word and act on it. He encourages his Apostles to freedom, sending them out to teach and heal, taking nothing with them. Herod is wondering who Jesus really is. Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is. Peter replies for them all, "The Christ of God." Jesus doesn't want them to announce he's the type of Messiah they were looking for. Instead, he tells them of his upcoming passion and death.

Next Sunday Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about someone driving out evil in his name. He warns about giving scandal, especially to children and calls for a radical avoidance of evil. We are to separate ourselves from it and choose to turn away from sin and its sources as radically as if to cut off our hand or pluck out our eye. It's about life itself.

A Reflection for Trinity 16

+ The predominant culture at the moment – if we dignify it with that word – sets great store at being a winner - I suppose all civilisations do. Across the Atlantic in certain circles if you describe someone as

a "loser" it's one of the worst things you can say about them. And, of course, by this standard, they think they know exactly what constitutes winning and losing in the race of life in which we all take part.

Winning is being better than everyone else, earning more money, gaining more glory, fame, praise and respect. Winning is about having in one's hands the power to control - one's own life and the lives of others. It's better to be strong rather than weak, young rather than old, famous and admired, rather than ignored or looked down on.

And, of course, it's a human trait – it's a fallen human trait maybe, but nevertheless we all share it to a greater or lesser degree - to want to be big rather than small, strong rather than weak, praised rather than viewed with suspicion. That's how life is: as they tell us increasingly, get used to it!

Not necessarily, says Jesus.

The Gospel is a story - God's own story, acted out in human history by God himself, and it shouldn't come as a shock to find out that it is deeply subversive of the values we are told make the world go around.

St Mark's Gospel today gives us the second instance of Jesus predicting his own death and resurrection and again the disciples fail to catch on. Mark tells us that not only were they unable to understand what he was talking about but that they didn't even dare to ask him what he meant, probably because the last time they failed to understand him he gave them quite a tongue-lashing for being so slow and obstinate in their thinking. It's clear that Jesus' followers didn't want to understand the implications of what he was telling them. Like all of us they were deeply immersed in the ways of the world; they wanted to be the disciples of someone who was a success, someone who was really going places; they didn't want to hear about failure and its ultimate manifestation, death itself.

They didn't understand. Spectacularly so, in fact, because as they were walking to Capernaum, they were having a discussion about who was the greatest among them, no doubt in the terms I was talking about at the beginning. What better way of trying to shield themselves from the crazy, counter-cultural things Our Lord was telling them than to get back into the real world of fame and prestige and rivalry

and competition - the kind of world which made sense to them, a world of realism, a view of the world everyone was plugged into.

When Jesus challenges them about their conversation, one gets the impression from their silence that they were rather ashamed that they were so far from his way of thinking, from his wavelength, if you like. So, Jesus then adopts the formal posture of the teacher; he sits down with the twelve - the apostles, the inner circle of his disciples - and tries to make them understand. "Just stop and listen!" he says to them. And his first words are what today we might think of a typical use of paradox, the sort of thing he delights in: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all, he says to them. Yes, it's a typically rabbinical paradox – the sort of thing teachers in the ancient world did all the time - it's meant to challenge those who heard it and make them think differently. But because of who it is who is saying it it's a paradox of God - this is true, he is saying to them, this is the way *the true* "real world," the world of the kingdom of heaven, actually operates. This is the way of the God who turns our values and attitudes upside down. And he says to them, if you want to be part of it, then this is the way you should be, too. Forget the interminable arguments about who is the greatest, forget your obsession with personal prestige, forget the ways of the world: they won't last. Embrace the truth of my cross and resurrection. This is the true reality – actually not the world turned upside down, but turned the right way up.

There were obviously children in the house where Jesus was staying, because he then grabs a little child - probably no more than a toddler because he picks him or her up in his arms. This isn't what we these days would call a school age child, one who was capable of running errands and making himself or herself useful in the fields, or the kitchen or the workshop, but probably almost a babe in arms - someone who is no material, practical use to anyone in that society - for a few years at least. And Jesus says to the apostles and to us all that this is how we are in the eyes of God – not useful for how much we can contribute – not a unit of production - but simply loved for who we are and precious.

Our Christian vocation, our baptismal vocation (and maybe that could be one of the reasons the little child is so central here in the gospel passage) is to enter into that world which the apostles and disciples seem at first so reluctant to enter, and not to live our lives according to the infinite series of league tables and distinctions by which we like to judge and classify other people and write them off, even if only in our own minds - of course, being human, we all do it. But - equally clearly, our vocation is to embrace the new humanity, to put on the 'New Man,' as St Paul puts it - to live by that other, greater, reality which is marked with the sign of the cross - the symbol and sign of God's own sacrificial love - and which sets us free to follow Christ in the new life of the resurrection.

When the Church herself tries to embrace success and operate by the values and methods of the world, ironically she becomes the most abject failure; when we ourselves do so we are most of all to be pitied, because we set on one side our baptismal vocation in favour of the values which pass away, the standards which don't speak to us of the life of God's kingdom – the things which speak to us of eternity and the mystery at the heart of all things. But when we at least *try* to live by those strange and paradoxical values and standards of Jesus in the Gospel - then we are both most fully human and most fully children of God. +

Saint of the Week

21st September

St Matthew

Like many of the Apostles, the information we have about St Matthew is sketchy. We know from the Gospel accounts that he was a tax collector. He was working for the occupying Roman forces and so, his job would have caused him to be despised. Yes, Jesus called him to follow him, and Matthew followed. It goes to show that Jesus calls the most unlikely people to be his followers. After he had heard Jesus' call to follow him, Matthew invited Jesus to eat with him. This caused uproar with the scribes and Pharisees, as they thought it was awful that Jesus should eat in the house of such a sinner. Jesus responded by saying that he had not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

There are no records of Matthew's death, or accounts of what happened to him after the Ascension, but the tradition is that he left to spread the Gospel to other countries, perhaps in Persia or Ethiopia. O Almighty God, whose blessed Son called Matthew the tax collector to be an apostle and evangelist: give us grace to forsake the selfish pursuit of gain and the possessive love of riches that we may follow in the way of your Son Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Ministry Area Prayer

Dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to work together as a Ministry Area. May we engage with each other with faith and encouragement. May we manage each situation with wisdom and mutual respect. May we serve with integrity, creativity and purpose. May we speak with openness and gentleness. May we offer our gifts, time and finances with generosity. May we face each challenge with courage and the desire to grow through it. May we all be drawn deeper into our relationship with You and be known as your disciples. Help us to show your love, proclaim your Good News and grow your Kingdom in this place. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**

The St Deiniol Lectures

Monday October 4th at 7pm

Professor John Clarke,
Professor Emeritus in the
History of Ideas, Kingston
University, London,
on:

**"Mysticism: its
Relevance Today"**

followed by open discussion

**Itton Village Hall, NP16 6BP
Itton Road, Chepstow (B4293)**

*To allow for Covid safety
measures, please pre-book
with Anne Octon (01291
641918; anneocton@gmail.com)*

NB: Please wear masks on
entry to the hall - you can
remove them once seated.